

Did Hitler Want a World Dominion?

The dispute among historians about the true nature of Hitler's war aims still continues and, in all certainty, will go on as long as history remains 'an argument without an end'. Sixteen years after A.J.P. Taylor came out with his thesis that Hitler was merely a traditional statesman, of limited aims, who was only responding to a given situation without any preconceived plan of world conquest, the controversy among historians has not yet receded. Taylor's extravagant statements, however, are now being regarded with much less credibility owing to the additional evidence which he either ignored or which was simply not accessible to him.¹

Did Hitler in fact have any specific design, a master plan, a definite blueprint for the aggression he was preparing for and which was to unfold, stage by stage, from 1933 to 1945? The standard term which German historians writing on the Nazi period have accepted for this kind of plan is Hitler's 'Programme'. Not surprisingly, it is treated with forbearance by their British and American colleagues. For instance, Geoffrey Barraclough maintains that 'there is not a scrap of evidence to support . . . the idea that Hitler had a distinctive "Programme"'.² Moreover, he seems to be puzzled by the fact that German historians³ always speak of Hitler's 'Programme' in quotation marks, thereby implying that the 'Programme' is a post-facto construction of historians, for which there is no direct contemporary evidence. Let us first briefly examine Hitler's vision of Germany's future role in the world, as it developed during his active political life. To avoid unnecessary semantic quibbles, I should perhaps warn the reader that in this survey the name 'Hitler' will be frequently used in place of 'Germany'; for such was the charismatic appeal of this man and the totalitarian character of his power, that Hitler can justifiably be seen as the personification of Germany's will-power from the moment he assumed full control over her foreign and military affairs. 'The point cannot be stressed too strongly', says Norman Rich, 'Hitler was master in the Third Reich . . . in his ultimate control of power and authority, Hitler was indeed the Führer.'⁴

When, just before Christmas 1924, Hitler was released from the prison at Landsberg, having served only nine months of his five year sentence for the abortive coup in Munich of November 1923, he had completed a manuscript which contained the crucial statement: 'Germany will either be a world power or there will be no Germany.'⁵ This manuscript, for which he had originally selected the rather pathetic title: 'Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice', was to become the bible of the National Society movement in Germany under its abridged title 'My Struggle'.

Yet, in spite of its explosive content, or perhaps precisely because of its extraordinary verbosity, *Mein Kampf* was never taken seriously outside Germany. The German historian K.D. Bracher is therefore absolutely justified when he says that 'the most important problem of National Socialism is that of its fundamental underrating.'⁶ For some time, however, before war broke out, several authors who knew Hitler intimately had tried to warn world opinion by publishing Hitler's sinister revelations. They insisted that Hitler's ideas should be regarded as deadly serious — but all in vain. Above all, two prominent names of fugitives from Nazi Germany deserve to be mentioned: Konrad Heiden and Hermann Rauschning.⁷ Heiden and Rauschning presented Nazism as a sort of irrational drive aspiring to dominate and conquer. Hitler, as its embodiment, was portrayed as an unscrupulous opportunist who, inspired by his sheer nihilism, had no precise doctrine, in other words, no 'Programme' for world conquest. The two authors, however, agreed that the Nazi doctrine, as revealed in *Mein Kampf*, contained two fundamental elements: firstly, the racist doctrine of a *Herrenvolk*, which showed itself in the racial superiority of the Nordic Germanic tribe over all other races, and was moreover reinforced by antisemitism; and secondly, it contained the idea of a *Lebensraum* in the East. Rauschning saw in Hitler the apocalyptic rider of world annihilation and an eruption of the 'beast from the abyss.'⁸

Leaving aside the recent pretentious book, *Hitler's War* by David Irving which, despite its astonishing amassment of primary evidence, does not discuss Hitler's long-term objectives but only day-to-day routine in his headquarters,⁹ the most noticeable feature has been the revival of the psycho-historical approach among the uncouth biographies of Hitler. Apart from focusing on the rather masochistic perversion of Hitler's megalomania,¹⁰ there are also bold and original attempts, such as the works of Rudolf

Binion, to analyse the subconscious sources of Hitler's extraordinary psychological power over the German nation. Binion recognizes two main thrusts to Hitler's politics both on the individual and collective level: one was his personal experience of antisemitism which apparently derived from a trauma during Hitler's young manhood when he had lost his mother after being unsuccessfully treated by a Jewish doctor; the other was the collective trauma of nonacceptance of the defeat in the first world war, which Hitler shared with the majority of Germans. He experienced the latter with utmost intensity during his convalescence from gas poisoning in Pasewalk shortly before the war ended. It made him, on the one hand, into a passionate enemy of the communist revolution, which he believed had been instigated by the Jews, and, on the other, it led to the desire for the reconquest of the *Lebensraum* in the East, which Germany had gained through the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and subsequently lost during the same year of 1918.¹¹

The broad contingent of historians, however, in assessing Hitler's ideas and their impact on Germany's foreign policy and conduct of war seems to accept the first obvious fact that the second world war was unleashed primarily because of Germany's irresistible drive, spurred by the new Nazi ideology, to repudiate the limitations of the Versailles Treaty. The historians, however, have been less in agreement as to the appreciation of Hitler's specific role in this process. By applying only very broad criteria, one can perhaps divide them into three schools of interpretation which often overlap.

The first one is still very much the expansion of Rauschnig's own view, particularly with regard to the idea of a *Lebensraum*. It is supported in Alan Bullock's book on Hitler¹² — the most well-known biography, perhaps superseded only by Joachim Fest.¹³ In the first version published in 1952 Bullock does not question Hitler's war aims or his global 'Programme' of world dominion. However, important new sources have been unearthed since, above all *Hitler's Table Talk* and the so-called *Hitler's Second Book*, an unknown manuscript from 1928 discovered by Gerhard Weinberg amongst the captured German documents in the National Archives, Alexandria (Va.), in Autumn 1958.¹⁴ Whereas Bullock was compelled by the sheer importance of new evidence to bring his biography of Hitler up to date, Taylor never did. The latter, whose much discussed book has already been mentioned, remains even today perhaps the most eccentric demythologizer of Hitler.¹⁵ It is,

therefore, difficult to rank this brilliant and controversial glossarist¹⁶ along with other representatives of the first group.¹⁷ Taylor maintains that the outbreak of war in 1939 was caused largely by misunderstanding and miscalculations on the part of Western politicians as well as Hitler himself. Needless to say, in this kind of road-accident approach to the causes of the war any quest for ideological motivation of Hitler's aggressive moves would be misplaced. He rejects the idea of Hitler having any precise plan of aggression. When referring to Churchill's statement of 14 March 1938 in the House of Commons, that Europe was 'confronted with a programme of aggression, nicely calculated and timed, unfolding stage by stage',¹⁸ he had this to say:

This view was, in my judgement, wrong. Hitler, it seems to me, had no precise plans of aggression, only an intention, which he held in common with most Germans, to make Germany again the most powerful state in Europe and a readiness to take advantage of events. I am confident that the truth of this interpretation will be recognized once the problem is discussed in terms of detached historical curiosity and not of political commitment.¹⁹

The debate concerning Hitler's true war aims was in fact not initiated on the English historical scene by the publication of Taylor's controversial *Origins of the Second World War*, but a few years earlier by Hugh Trevor-Roper in his introduction to the first edition of *Hitler's Table Talk* in 1953. Seven years later he published a more elaborate article,²⁰ which summed up his views on Hitler's war aims. Although Trevor-Roper says explicitly that Hitler had indeed a definite objective in creating a *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe, as Rauschning saw it, he fails to give us guidance about Hitler's ultimate objectives.

This aspect was fully developed by the second and remarkably coherent school of historians which is associated with the 'Programme' thesis. Andreas Hillgruber²¹ and Klaus Hildebrand²² are its leading names, who constructed, on a speculative basis but backed up by convincing and detailed evidence, an extremely elaborate concept of Hitler's stage-by-stage plan leading to the acquisition of a world dominion. Hitler's virtual silence about his long-term objectives in the domain of foreign policy during the years 1933-37 has often been pointed out by the critics of the 'Programme' thesis. One of the hitherto unexplored areas of Hitler's intensive preoccupation during these years was architecture which bears, in its symbolic imperial form as envisaged by Hitler

himself, all the necessary features designed to epitomize the future grandiose style of the German World Empire. The gap, however, has been closed by the recently published book by Jochen Thies on Hitler as the 'Architect of World Power'.²³

Finally, there is a third and rather heterogeneous group of interpreters, who have, nevertheless, one feature in common, which one might call 'anti-hitlerite', but in a different sense from that with which Taylor might be associated. They do not centre their analyses on Hitler's foreign policy or military strategy, but on the mechanics of social and economic forces in Nazi Germany, which may also be conveniently called by the vague and theophoric term 'structure'. The instrument or agent of these forces, more or less accidental and not at all determining them, was Hitler. The most simplistic version, propounded by the paraphrastic Marxist school, particularly in East Germany, is that of Hitler as an interchangeable figurehead in the service of German monopoly capitalism, who unleashed the war and pursued goals dictated by these anonymous masters. At its extreme, this approach sees in Hitler a mere 'factor among many, but not a substantial cause' in the formulation of foreign policy and strategy in the Third Reich.²⁴ A more sophisticated view is taken by the current so-called neo-revisionist school — to be distinguished from the earlier 'revisionist' school which flourished in America during the 1950s. Hitler is to be interpreted as a social phenomenon from his social basis and social function. Because of his conditioning he may well appear as a 'rather weak dictator';²⁵ his incoherent outbursts referring to the conquest of a world dominion are to be understood simply as 'ideological metaphors', set up by the Führer merely in order to extort more enthusiastic activity in the name of the regime which is characterized as a movement without substance and aim.²⁶ A more elaborate approach is supported by Tim Mason, who, backed up by massive but inevitably selective evidence, concentrates on the internal crisis of Nazi Germany where serious economic and social frictions were to be avoided by Hitler's preventive and rather adventurous off-hand strikes in the domain of foreign policy. But Mason stresses the cumulative effect of these nameless pressures rather than Hitler as the prime cause of these expansionist outbursts. Hitler's limited conquests of neighbouring territories were designed primarily as *Raubkriege* to provide additional resources by plunder in order to maintain the living standards of Germany's working population.²⁷

It is impossible to reduce Hitler to a mere interchangeable

figurehead of German fascism and his foreign policy to nothing but a derivation of the economic and social requirements of a dynamic but chaotic regime. The functional and structural interpretations also fail to explain what was the key factor in Nazism, namely the role of its racist ideology, without which one can hardly imagine the historical Hitler and the horrors of the 'Final Solution' (*Endlösung*). It is precisely here, in the sinister praxis and theory of racism, that lies the most conspicuous feature of Nazism: its ominous singularity in history. One must admit, not without a shiver, that Hitler overreaches the usual dimensions of a social type — whatever the dangers of demonization which are not small when assessing his person. As Joachim Fest put it, he incorporated all the anxieties, protests and hopes of the age in his own self to a remarkable degree.²⁸ Hitler was 'peculiarly apt to excite the mind and paralyse it at the same time', writes Peter Stern in the preface of his book.²⁹ That antisemitism had its roots in the political, economic and social conditions of Europe has already been demonstrated many times, but the decisive and singular moment in Nazi racist policy lay in the gruesome perfection and finalization of its 'solutions', such as genocide, euthanasia, racial extermination on a massive scale aided by advanced technology and, last but not least, the obsession with eugenics.³⁰

What made Hitler's plans particularly dangerous was his inability to reconcile the two decisive forces in his thoughts and actions: the racial dogma with rational calculations.³¹ Eventually, he ceased to distinguish between means and ends, his irrational behaviour led him to use the means of his racial policy as well as the methods of his ruthless war conduct as the ends in themselves. It is not only on the higher level of historical abstraction and reconstruction, such as the present discussion on Hitler's ultimate war aims might entail, but also on the much more elementary level of historical research, such as Hitler's binding decision to prepare for a 'war', that misunderstandings occur. Hitler shared with his generals the fears about the danger of a war on two fronts, which the latter wanted to avoid at all costs — a few among the generals even considered removing Hitler in 1938-39 should he continue in his extremely risky provocations. In the important address to his generals of 23 May 1939 Hitler said that 'there will be fighting', — which has been mistranslated in most works in English as 'there will be war.'³² If Hitler, at this stage, did not want a general war, let alone a total war, what kind of 'fighting' did he have in mind, what

was he planning to achieve? Where would he stop and feel content with his acquisitions? Did he want more than the mere recovery of the former German territories in Europe? Did he also want those where substantial German minorities had lived for centuries? Did Hitler aspire to recover the former German colonial empire? When he spoke of the *Lebensraum* in the East, did he mean only the subjugation of the Ukraine, or of the entire Soviet Union? What did he think would be the predictable reaction of the Western Powers? Did he believe that Britain would let him conquer the entire East without declaring war on Germany? What were Hitler's views on the remaining world powers, particularly the United States and Japan? What kind of solution would the German world conquest bring to the non-European nations, particularly those still under Western colonial rule? These are the sort of questions which must be asked by every historian who wants to grasp the phenomenon called Hitler.

As Hitler's *Second Book* shows, even between 1919 and 1928 he had already developed a certain set of ideas about Germany's future role in the world — the 'Programme' — which he consistently held until the end of his life. What was this 'Programme' all about? The driving force behind the unprecedented dynamism in Nazism and its most radical component was its racial ideology, which in our opinion, overshadowed all other factors. It consisted of a mixture of social Darwinism and of pathological antisemitism. The white Germanic Aryan race (*Herrenvolk*), so the National Socialists believed, was predestined to rule the world. As one of the strongest obstacles hindering the spread of Nazism in Germany proved to be Communism, the anti-Soviet course suited Hitler's tactics perfectly. He wanted to be regarded as the defender of Western civilization. Russia figured not only as the centre of world communism, but could be easily identified as the repository of world Jewry. But how do we explain that Hitler was capable of calculated diplomatic manoeuvres, illuminated by sudden fits of hysterical acting, and that he simultaneously followed a rather pragmatic course in foreign policy — which A.J.P. Taylor uses as the basis for his counter-argument? The answer to this apparent contradiction between Hitler's words and deeds can be found precisely in that phrase from *Mein Kampf*, quoted earlier: 'Germany will either be a world power or there will be no Germany.'³³ The determination was already there and it was absolute. Hitler believed that his destiny was to lead the German nation into

an apocalyptic struggle against Bolshevik Russia. Even if we remain in the sphere of the perverse racist ideology of National Socialism, it is obvious that the mere assumption that it was to be the superior Germanic race which was destined to rescue European civilization, and indeed the whole world, from the judeo-bolshevik impurity as well as capitalist decadence, leads to only one logical conclusion: could a superior race remain for ever confined to such an unworthy and ridiculously small living space in Europe? For the postulate of an undisputed racial superiority implies that it is the Nordic race which is ultimately destined to dominate the whole world.

As for the scale of German armaments in 1938-39, historians like Alan Taylor were quickly convinced that Hitler could not possibly want a general war.³⁴ On the other hand, Tim Mason is absolutely right in rejecting Taylor's simplified generalization as 'based upon a very imperfect knowledge of the economic history of the Third Reich.'³⁵ The total German military expenditure from 1936 to 1939 accounted for 16.5 per cent of the country's GNP,³⁶ more than twice as much as in France and Britain. The extent of German armaments, although not fit for a general war on two fronts, was indeed sufficient and modern enough for short but swift and effective blitz thrusts. This was confirmed by one of the chief German experts on armaments, Rolf Wagenführ.³⁷ This view is by and large supported by Alan Milward who considers the concept of the *Blitzkrieg*,³⁸ in its entire complexity, as ideally suited for the kind of aggressive campaigns in brief but powerful bursts, aiming at a limited territorial acquisition. Speed and surprise were its most distinct features, unscrupulous propaganda its best psychological weapon. The memories of the first world war, with its endless carnage, exercised a profound influence on men like Hitler. He was afraid of its demoralizing effects on the population, and encouraged, therefore, the planners of the German armed forces to develop an entirely new and revolutionary concept of *Blitzkrieg*. It would apply only such weapons and war technology as were needed for a brief war campaign, without upsetting the balance of the German economy, which continued to be orientated, until 1942, to peace-time consumer goods; thus, not allowing more than fifty per cent of public expenditure to be absorbed by the armament sector. The expected upsurge of war expenditure in the course of a blitz campaign, the loss of a productive labour force resulting from the call up, was to be compensated by looting and plundering the conquered territories.

Thanks to the definite work on the two decisive years of 1940 and 1941 in German strategic planning by Andreas Hillgruber,³⁹ we now have a much clearer picture of Hitler's strategic ideas, of how he wanted to achieve German world dominion in a series of blitz campaigns, extending stage by stage, over the entire globe. Hitler's grand strategy, according to the 'Programme'-school, was to evolve along three stages.

During the first stage of his 'Programme' Hitler wanted Germany to achieve the domination of the European continent. German-speaking groups were to be brought together and lost territories recovered. The enlarged Third Reich, which would emerge in defiance of the Versailles Treaty, was to be called the Greater German Reich and it was to last for a thousand years . . . Hitler would, of course, make use of any minority claims under the cover of self-determination. In order to win Britain's connivance he was ready for the time being to make concessions in restraining Germany's claims on her former colonies in Africa. In order to show moderation he accepted a prospective reduction of German naval rearmament embodied in the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935, for he did not, at any rate, envisage using the fleet during the initial stages of his aggressive moves on the Continent. But all these concessions were made on the assumption that Germany was to obtain a free hand in her Eastward expansion (*Drang nach Osten*).

Hitler, who was convinced that Britain and France would remain passive, was ready to risk a limited war against Czechoslovakia as early as Autumn 1938. Thus, the Sudetenland fell, without war, the second victim of Nazi aggression after the *Anschluß* of Austria in the spring of the same year. In September 1939 Poland followed. It was not the Soviet Union, but France, the key continental power allied with Britain, which stood in the way of Hitler's ambition to obtain hegemony over the Continent. The conquest of Russia, with acquisition of colonies in Central and Western Africa was also conclude the first stage in Hitler's 'Programme'. For him, however, racial motivation played the decisive part, for only the submission of Russia could help Germany establish the so-called *Lebensraum* — the future living space for German colonists who were to move in only after the extermination squads had dealt with the Jews. The acquisition of colonies in Central and Western Africa was also considered in order to provide the raw materials not available in Europe, and necessary naval bases in the Atlantic for the next round of fighting.⁴⁰ It was believed that with such territorial expan-

sion the new German *Grossraum* would become autarchic, i.e. entirely self-reliant and capable of withstanding any economic blockade which might have been staged by the major maritime powers. Whether the hypothetical German empire would then be allowed to respire and consolidate for a couple of years or several decades, depended very much on the attitude of Britain. If an early arrangement between the two countries could have been achieved, Hitler would not have had to waste time and energy in sending his armoured forces down to the Persian Gulf, through Afghanistan to India in order to force Britain down on her knees.⁴¹

Thus, after eliminating France and Russia, the only remaining world powers would be Britain and her overseas empire, Japan and the USA. The latter was regarded by Hitler as the most difficult rival for Germany to challenge, but not to be drawn into the conflict as long as the continental expansion stage of Hitler's instalment plan had not been completed. He was led to speculate that the decisive duel between the 'Teutonic Empire of the German Nation and the American World Empire', in other words the second stage of his 'Programme', would have to take place after he had died.⁴² Thus, not even at the peak of his military successes was Hitler sure whether he could complete the first stage of his expansionist plan. Indeed, when on 11 December 1941 Hitler had declared war on the USA in a self-destructive fit of absent-mindedness he had to admit to the Japanese Ambassador Oshima three weeks later that he did not know how to defeat America.⁴³ The consolidation phase of the *Lebensraum* acquisition in the East was to be shored up by further external operations in the direction of the Mediterranean and the Middle East with the aim of controlling the oil wells of Iraq and the Persian Gulf. Swift and diverse thrusts were to be directed across the Caucasus and Persia, advancing as far as Afghanistan with a direct threat to India, for Hitler saw in her the source of British world supremacy.⁴⁴ The other arm of the Axis pincer movement extended from Libya towards Suez and had the stubborn Russian defences collapsed, nobody could have stopped Hitler reaching his military objectives either in 1941 or 1942. The British took the threat very seriously but were incapable of concentrating more troops and equipment in this area than they actually did. The post-Barbarossa stage was also to include the seizure of Gibraltar and the securing of the West African coast with the Azores and Canary Islands as important strategic outposts for German naval and air forces, ready to attack America with their submarines and long-

distance bombers.⁴⁵

In Hitler's calculation Britain was assigned an important role during the second stage of Germany's world conquest. He was prepared, indeed anxious, to accept her as a junior partner with her overseas Empire left intact, provided she renounced her position in Europe and gave Hitler a free hand by accepting his peace terms. Alternatively, and this would have been against Hitler's wishes, she would become a subdued vassal should her resistance continue. Thus, the two major protagonists of European civilization would challenge the American continent dominated by the racially decomposed USA. Finally, the elimination of United States as a world power would lay the foundations for the third stage, the real beginning of the new racial millenium over the entire globe under the ruthless domination of the Germanic Aryan elite.

The relationship with Japan and her future position in this new Germanic world empire was never sufficiently clarified by Hitler. In all crucial decisions mistrust prevailed between the two Axis partners. Hitler kept the date of 'Barbarossa' secret from the Japanese and they, in turn, left the Germans in the dark about their decision to open the Pacific War by attacking Pearl Harbour.⁴⁶ Although a secret military convention had been signed between Germany and Japan on 18 January 1942, dividing the Eastern hemisphere between the two powers along the 70° Eastern longitude, running across Siberia and India, no specific military agreements between Berlin and Tokyo were ever concluded. Leaving aside the insurmountable logistic difficulties which the two Axis partners would have run into had they agreed to make the Indian Ocean area the centre of their joint operations, Hitler's resentment against the 'Yellow Peril' was a serious factor to count on.⁴⁷ A revealing note on this subject, preserved in the diaries of von Hassell, was recorded on 22 March 1942, i.e. barely a week after the fall of Singapore: 'It is said that Hitler himself is not entirely enthusiastic about the gigantic successes of the Japanese, and has said he would gladly send the English twenty divisions to help throw back the yellow men.'⁴⁸

Although Hitler realized that the attitude of Britain was of crucial importance for the smooth running during the first stage of his 'Programme', in fixing his mind on the belief that Britain would one day be compelled to accept Germany's leadership, he made his fatal miscalculation. He remained convinced that Germany's *Drang nach Osten*, specifically designed to annihilate communist

Russia, would gain the support of the British ruling classes. He began to doubt, as early as 1937, whether Britain would tolerate excessive German territorial expansion on the Continent, which would finally lead to nothing less than complete German hegemony over Europe. As he had revealed during the 1920s, in *Mein Kampf* and particularly in *The Second Book*, an alliance with Britain — the only viable partner for him on racial as well as strategic grounds — remained Hitler's dearest political dream. Alarmed by the prospects of sudden failure, Hitler tried to pacify British politicians and to divert their attention from his efforts to conquer Europe. His dual-purpose colonial policy, already mentioned, was one of the devices: German colonial claims were timed to divert British attention and to gain more concessions, but were abruptly abandoned by Hitler at the right moment in a pathetic but carefully calculated gesture of reconciliation.

The other important factor which played a decisive role in the relationship of the two countries during the Nazi era was Hitler's love-hate attitude towards the British. Two irreconcilable traits, as in his grand strategy, constituted Hitler's ambivalent views on the British. The first was his political pragmatism which told him that Germany in her attempt to gain hegemony over Europe would encounter Britain's hostility — if only because of the traditional balance of power, since there was no ideological strife between the two countries. Over the last two centuries Britain's policy in Europe had been designed to maintain a careful balance between the European powers and not to allow any of them to expand beyond reasonable limits. The second characteristic of Hitler was his admiration for the British super-race, amply illustrated, in Hitler's view, by their ability to control with relatively tiny forces the vast spaces and numerically superior species of world population. A sentiment of 'Nordic solidarity' a sort of 'racial internationalism' — as a perverted paraphrase to 'proletarian internationalism' — bound Hitler in spirit with the English. It was frequently reflected in his laudatory comments on the role the British were playing as colonial rulers in India. Hitler needed an historical analogy for his future *Lebensraum* in the East. Whenever he spoke of Russia in this context he turned his gaze to India in a vain attempt to draw oversimplified parallels: 'What India was for England, the territories of Russia will be for us. Our role in Russia will be analogous to that of England in India . . . Like the English we shall rule this empire with a handful of men . . .'⁴⁹ On the other hand, if we look at Hitler as a shrewd and calculating tactician, he did search for the weaknesses in

the aging edifice of the British Empire and tried to exploit them. During the decisive Hossbach conference of 5 November 1937 Hitler predicted that the Empire would soon disintegrate for four reasons: the constitutional struggle in India, the Irish question, the Japanese threat in the Far East and the Anglo-Italian discord over the control of the Mediterranean.

Hitler calculated that Germany's continental expansion could be completed by 1945 at the latest. After that he would be free to carry out his ambitious overseas plans. But Hitler's scenario for world conquest by instalments had been significantly halted by the end of 1941, when he failed to eliminate Russia and, by declaring war on the USA, made the dreaded prospect of a two-front war a permanent feature of German strategy. Though the Axis fortunes brightened in the early part of 1942 owing to the unexpected victories of the Japanese, Hitler was neither able nor willing to co-ordinate his plans with theirs; the repeated Japanese requests that Germany should conclude an armistice with the Soviet Union, and throw her full weight against the Anglo-Saxons, drove Hitler mad.⁵⁰ Then there was Hitler's deficiency in understanding the importance of maritime strategy, for his views on war conduct were hopelessly dominated by the land warfare dicta of which he had direct experience as infantryman during the first world war. The importance of naval strategy, therefore, did not occur to him until late 1937-38. He then embarked on a grandiose naval rearmament programme, the so-called 'Z-Plan', (from the German word 'Ziel', meaning 'target') in order to provide Germany with a navy capable of eventually challenging the Allied sea powers. By this time Hitler was losing hope that Britain would join Germany as a 'junior partner'. This 'Z-Plan' constitutes indeed some of the best proof of Hitler's 'Programme' for world domination and can be seen in direct historical parallel to the plans of Admiral Tirpitz, the fleet-builder of the Wilhelminian navy before the first world war. Resulting from Hitler's special directive of 27 January 1939, the 'Z-Plan' envisaged a navy that by 1944-46 would comprise ten giant battleships, three battle cruisers, four aircraft carriers, eight heavy cruisers, 44 light cruisers designed for colonial service, 68 destroyers, 90 torpedo-boats and 250 submarines.⁵¹ In addition, Hitler ordered that henceforth naval armament must be given priority over the other two services, the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe. During the eight years necessary for the completion of this new German world navy the risk of direct conflict with Britain, as Hitler

openly admitted to Admiral Raeder, had to be avoided at all costs.

The attainment of the unrivalled world supremacy (*Weltherrschaft*) in the last stage of Hitler's 'Programme' was to represent the ultimate phase in Hitler's drive which aimed at the establishment of the Thousand Years' Reich. Leaving unanswered Germany's future relationship with the Japanese variant of *Lebensraum* in the Far East, the Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, one is still astonished at Hitler's profound misjudgements vis-à-vis the other powers. We spoke of his fatal error as far as alliance with Britain was concerned: he also underestimated the industrial potential of the USA and her isolationist attitude to the European war. His further, equally catastrophic mistake was the disastrous miscalculation of Russia's resistance to the German onslaught. Here, as elsewhere, Hitler's racialist ideology was directly responsible. The conquest of European Russia, the core of the continental stage of his 'Programme', must be seen as inseparable from his fanatic belief that Bolshevism — in Hitler's eyes identical with the advent of the world Jewish conspiracy — must be uprooted. This racist obsession in Hitler's mind must also be seen as equally important a component in his overall strategy as the other factors, more related to the general conduct of war. Moreover, the *Weltherrschaft* was to represent a new revolutionary phase in the development of civilization, precisely because it was to begin with the procreation and cultivation of the new super-human species: the so-called *Herrenvolk*. How this would be achieved was foreshadowed by the adoption of the 'Final Solution' against the so-called inferior human species, involving mass extermination not only of the Jews, but of the entire strata of intelligentsia of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This was indeed the *ultima ratio* of Hitler's 'Programme' and he maintained his apocalyptic vision through the war despite German defeats and withdrawals from 1942 onwards. While he was concentrating on the destruction of Jews in the East, the Red Army was already counterattacking along the entire front. Why did he intensify this mass genocide when, from the pragmatic strategy stand alone, he badly needed the railway carriages and the manpower for military purposes? Now the Blitzkrieg strategy was all over, but Hitler carried on his fanatical determination whose sinister meaning had already been spelled out in the 1920s: 'Germany will either be a world power or there will be no Germany.'

Hitler's insane views on the future procreation of mankind

found a similar apocalyptic utterance in his prophecy, that in the event of defeat there was no alternative to the total annihilation of the German nation. Rauschnig tells us that as early as 1932 he witnessed a macabre scene during which Hitler was heard to say: 'We shall never capitulate . . . We may be destroyed, but if we are, we shall drag a world with us — a world in flames.' And he hummed a characteristic motive from the *Twilight of the Gods*.⁵² In March 1945, a few weeks before his suicide, Hitler, living underground in the shelter of the Reichschancellery, as Rauschnig said like 'the beast from the abyss', reiterated to Albert Speer: 'If the German nation is not ready to do everything for its survival, then, well, it should rather perish . . .'⁵³

NOTES

1. A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London 1967).'
2. Geoffrey Barraclough, 'Farewell to Hitler' in *The New York Review of Books*, 3 April 1975, 15.
3. Barraclough refers to the comprehensive analysis by Klaus Hildebrand 'Hitlers Ort in der Geschichte des preußisch-deutschen Nationalstaates' in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 217 (1974), 584-632.
4. *Hitler's War Aims*, vol. I (New York 1973), 11, 77.
5. *Mein Kampf*, Engl. Edition, (London 1969), 596-98.
6. *Zeitgeschichtliche Kontroversen um Faschismus, Totalitarismus, Demokratie* (Munich 1976), 81.
7. K. Heiden, *Adolf Hitler. Das Zeitalter der Verantwortungslosigkeit* (Zürich 1936) and *Ein Mann gegen Europa*, Engl. trans., (London 1939). H. Rauschnig, *Germany's Revolution of Destruction* (London 1939) and *Hitler Speaks* (London 1939).
8. *Hitler Speaks*, preface. See also the most comprehensive review of literature on this topic which has hitherto appeared in English, by M. Michaelis, 'World Power Status or World Dominion? A Survey of the Literature on Hitler's Plan of World Dominion (1937-1970)' in *The Historical Journal*, 15 (1972), 331-60.
9. *Hitler's War* (London 1977). Irving's attempt to dissociate Hitler from the actual Final Solution order for the mass extermination of Jews, under the pretext that he has not found yet the crucial scrap of paper bearing Hitler's signature and date, has been unanimously dismissed by reviewers as a most irresponsible way of dealing with the Jewish Question.
10. E.g. W. Langer, *The Mind of Adolf Hitler* (London 1972).
11. 'Hitler's Concept of *Lebensraum*: The Psychological Basis' in *History of Childhood Quarterly — The Journal of Psychohistory*, 2 (1973), 187-258; 'Hitler

Looks East' in *ibid.*, 1 (1975), 85-102; *Hitler Among the Germans*, (New York 1976). The other, though less original, book from the US school of psycho-history which appeared recently is R.G.L. Waite, *The Psychopathic God, Adolf Hitler*, (London 1977).

12. *Hitler — A Study of Tyranny* (London 1952).

13. *Hitler* (London 1974).

14. H.R. Trevor-Roper, ed., *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944*, (London 1953). A separate version is H. Picker, ed. *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier, 1941-1942* (Bonn 1951); *Hitlers Secret Book*, (New York 1962).

15. Cf. A.J.P. Taylor in his televised talk 'Hitler as a Warlord' (BBC 1, 11 August 1976).

16. The more important contributions to the 'Taylor controversy' appear in E.M. Robertson's edited collection, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London 1971) and in the American edition with the same title edited by W.R. Louis (1972).

17. E.g. E. Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung — Entwurf einer Herrschaft*, (Tübingen 1969); A. Kuhn, *Hitlers außenpolitisches Programm* (Stuttgart 1970).

18. Quoted from W.S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. I, (London 1948), 244.

19. A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (London 1970), 519.

20. In *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), 121-33. See also introduction to *The Testament of Adolf Hitler* (London 1961).

21. *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung 1940-41* (Frankfurt am Main 1965); 'Der Faktor Amerika in Hitlers Strategie 1938-41' in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*. Supplement to the weekly *Das Parlament* of 11 May 1966; 'Japan und der Fall "Barbarossa" ' in *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, 18 (1968), 312; 'Die "Endlösung" und das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstück des rassenideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus' in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 20 (1972), 133 ff.; 'England in Hitlers außenpolitischer Konzeption' in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 218 (1974), 65-84; 'Deutschland 1936-1939' in O. Hauser, ed., *Weltpolitik 1933-1939*, vol. 1, and 'Die weltpolitische Lage 1939-1941: Deutschland' in *ibid.*, vol. 2, (Göttingen 1973), 1975.

22. *Vom Reich zum Weltreich. Hitler, NSDAP und koloniale Frage, 1919-1945*, (Munich 1970); *Foreign Policy of the Third Reich* (London 1973); 'Zwischen Mythos und Moderne — Hitler in seiner Zeit' in *Das Historisch-Politische Buch*, 22 (1974), 33; see also footnote 3 *Hitler, Deutschland und die Mächte*, (Düsseldorf 1976), 63-93.

23. *Architekt der Weltherrschaft. Die "Endziele" Hitlers* (Düsseldorf 1976).

24. R. Kühnl, 'Der deutsche Faschismus. Nationalsozialismus und "Drittes Reich"' in Einzeluntersuchungen und Gesamtdarstellungen' in *Neue Politische Literatur*, 15 (1970), 14.

25. H. Mommsen, 'National Socialism' in C.D. Kernig, ed., *Marxism, Communism and Western Society*, vol. 6 (Freiburg 1971), 68.

26. M. Broszat, 'Soziale Motivation und Führerbindung des Nationalsozialismus' in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 18 (1970), 408.

27. 'Innere Krise und Angriffskrieg 1938-1939' in F. Forstmeier and H.E. Volkmann, eds., *Wirtschaft und Rüstung am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, (Düsseldorf 1975) 158-88 and *Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft* (Dokumente und Materialien zur deutschen Arbeiterpolitik, 1936-1939) (Opladen 1975).

28. Op.cit., prologue.

29. Hitler, *The Führer and the People* (London 1975).

30. See also K. Hildebrand, 'Geschichte oder "Gesellschaftsgeschichte"' in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 223/2 (1976), 353. and 'Weltmacht oder Untergang: Hitlers Deutschland 1941-1945', in O. Hauser, ed., *Weltpolitik II, 1939-1945* (Göttingen 1975), 291.

31. Cf. Hildebrand's *Foreign Policy in the Third Reich*, footnote 22 above.

32. *DGFP*, D/VI, Nos. 195 and 433. Emphasized by Robertson, op. cit., 18. When Poland was attacked in 1939 the German General Staff had no operational military plans completed for the subsequent campaigns against Northern and Western Europe (cf. A. Hillgruber, *Deutschlands Rolle in der Vorgeschichte der beiden Weltkriege* (Göttingen 1967), 100.

33. Cf. footnote 5 above.

34. Taylor, op. cit., (London 1964), 16.

35. Cf. in Robertson (ed.); op. cit., 115.

36. Berenice Carroll, *Design for Total War* (The Hague 1968), 179-90, 262-67.

37. *Die deutsche Industrie im Kriege, 1939-45* (Berlin 1954).

38. *The German Economy at War* (London 1965).

39. *Hitlers Strategie* — see footnote 21 above.

40. For further details see Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich* (cf. footnote 22 above).

41. M. Hauner, 'The Place of India in the Strategic and Political Considerations of the Axis Powers, 1939-1942' (unpubl. Cambridge PhD Diss. 1972).

42. *Hitlers Zweites Buch*, 123-30. *Table Talk*, 10 September 1941; Conversation Ciano-Hitler, 25 October 1941, in Hillgruber (ed.), *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, 1939-1941, vol. 1, (Frankfurt 1967), 632, *Hitlers Strategie*, 200, *Faktor Amerika* . . . , 18, *Deutschlands Rolle* . . . , 69, 123.

43. Conversation Oshima-Hitler, 3 January 1942, in Hillgruber, *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten* . . . , 1942-1944, vol. 2, (Frankfurt am Main 1970), 41.

44. See footnote 41 above.

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46. Cf. B. Martin. *Deutschland und Japan im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen 1969), 103.

47. E.L. Presseisen; 'Le racisme et les Japonais (un dilemme Nazi)' in *Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, No. 5 (1963); Conversation Antonescu-Hitler, 11 February 1942, in Hillgruber, *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten* . . . , vol. 2, 48; G. Ciano: *Diaries 1939-1943* (London 1947), entries for 22 and 25 February, 10 and 11 March, and 24 April 1942; *The Goebbels Diaries* (London 1948), 94-95.

48. *The von Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944* (London 1948), 221.

49. *Table Talk*, 8-10 September 1942, 17-18 September 1941, For Hitler's views on India, see M. Hauner, 'Les puissances de l'Axe et la lutte de l'Inde pour l'indépendance' in *Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, No. 96 (1974).

50. See footnote 46 above.

51. F. Ruge, *Der Seekrieg 1939-1945* (Stuttgart 1962), 27, M. Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung, 1935-1941*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main 1970), 57; J. Dülffer: *Weimar, Hitler und die Marine* (Düsseldorf 1973), 498.

52. *Hitler Speaks*, 15.

53. A. Bullock, op. cit., (London 1962), 774. A. Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, (London 1971), 529, 588.

Milan Hauner

Research Fellow at the German Historical Institute, London, has contributed to *Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, No. 96 (1974) and to M. Funke, ed., *Hitler, Deutschland und die Mächte* (Düsseldorf 1976).

The 'Confession' of Mikhāil Bakunin

**With the Marginal Comments
of Tsar Nicholas I**



*Translated from the Russian by Robert C. Howes
With an Introduction and Notes by Lawrence D. Orton*

'Write to the sovereign as though you were speaking to your spiritual father' were the words of advice given in 1851 by Count Orlov, head of the political police, to Mikhail Bakunin, revolutionary, anarchist, and political prisoner of Tsar Nicholas I. The *Confession*, addressed to the tsar as his spiritual father, covers Bakunin's life from his arrival in Berlin in 1840 to his arrest for political activities by the Saxon police in May, 1849. Whatever his motives in writing the *Confession*, it is a fascinating document by a complex and brilliant, if often erratic, man. As a psychological document, it offers a remarkable picture of Mikhail Bakunin, the man and the political activist.

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